



Anti-Racists Victorious In Showdown With Fascist Court System

FARMINGVILLE, NY, July 31 — Attacks against Latino workers continue apace in Suffolk County, Long Island. Day laborers evicted from their homes continue to camp in the woods near Farmingville and allies of the fascist Minutemen continue to harass them and their prospective employers with photo and video cameras.

One year ago three anti-racist fighters were arrested for the “crime” of demonstrating in solidarity with these workers, under attack from a leader of the fascist anti-immigrant Sachem Quality of Life organization. Our militant picket line put him and his group — openly affiliated with other anti-immigrant racists such as the Minutemen — on the defensive. Workers that day appreciated our anti-racist presence and responded to our call for international working-class unity by joining our demonstration.

Our counter-attack against these arrests has seen that call spread more widely, growing out of this struggle. Hundreds of students and workers have packed the courtroom and seen the criminal INjustice system for what it is — fascism at work. The cops themselves openly declared that they can arrest anyone they want at any time during

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by filling the courtroom every day’**

any demonstration they don’t like. The deep truth of our slogan, “The Cops, The Courts, The Ku Klux Klan, All a Part of the Bosses’ Plan, has become apparent to more of our friends.

We took the offensive by reaching out to our base in the mass organizations and they responded by filling the courtroom every day. Some days we had 60 people for a courtroom made for 36 and some had to sit outside the courtroom. Other days we squeezed up to 50 people into the small room. We provided the political leadership for our attorneys who were ultimately won to the outlook of fighting for all three defendants as a whole, of jamming the courtroom with supporters and of making our politics primary throughout the entire trial. After one year, momentum continues to build (see box page 3).

At the close of the trial, after forty court appearances, all the defendants were found not guilty on all charges.

But the real victory here is the deepened political understanding we developed, a victory beyond the influence of any judge’s decision. It belongs to ALL workers.

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Religion, Oil Pipelines and Bosses’ Dogfight

IMPERIALIST WAR MASSACRES WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

In attacking Hezbollah, Israel’s fascist leaders further intensified both regional conflicts and the global rivalry among imperialists. The Israelis bit off more than they could chew. Having underestimated the resiliency of Hezbollah’s underground network and the size of its arsenal, Israel’s top brass now know that they need a ground war, not just air strikes, and have called up thousands of reservists.

Bombing Lebanese civilians has only inflamed hatred of Israel and its U.S. backers and built pro-Hezbollah sentiment from Gaza to Indonesia. [Supporting Hezbollah, however, is a grave political mistake. Hezbollah is a racist and fundamentally capitalist organization that takes orders from Iranian oil billionaires cloaked as ayatollahs.] In addition, with arms flowing from the U.S. to Israel and from Iran and Syria to Hezbollah, the local clash is rapidly evolving into an escalating proxy war that deepens the divide between U.S. imperialists mired in Iraq and a host of challengers. At stake in the broader struggle are control of the entire Middle East and its oil and the lives of millions — as cannon fodder or “collateral damage.”

“The United States is already at war with Iran; but for the time being the battle is being fought through surrogates,” wrote former ABC-TV news anchor Ted Koppel in the New York Times (7/21) citing a “senior Jordanian intelligence official.” Koppel and the Jordanian spy chief note Iran’s gift of 12,000 rockets to Hezbollah and “more than \$300 million in cash” to Hamas, “funneled through Syria” (although they fail to mention the U.S. rulers’ annual \$3 billion “contribution” to the Israeli war machine).

But the real cause of the current crisis, Koppel says, is the botched U.S. invasion of Iraq. Failing to replace Saddam Hussein with an effective occupying regime meant “tearing down the wall that had kept Iran in check.” That failure has had other destabilizing effects.

While Israel and Hezbollah were busy murdering children, Iraq’s oil minister Husain Al Shahrastani met in Washington with executives of Exxon Mobil, Chevron-Texaco, Shell and BP (France’s oil giant Total was conspicuously absent). Assuring the U.S. and British oil barons of first crack “in expanding Iraq’s oil sector and developing new fields” (Associated

Press, 7/28), he lamented that it would take at least four years to bring production even to pre-war peaks of four million barrels a day (mbd). U.S. rulers, represented by the Establishment’s Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), as well as Bush’s neocons, had projected a 6-mbd post-invasion output that would help spread prosperity, tranquility and pro-U.S. politics throughout the Mideast.

Leslie Gelb, ex-president of the CFR, calls Bush’s Iraq fiasco the U.S.’s chief obstacle in dealing with Lebanon. “Mr. Bush has to restore America’s military credibility....[H]e is so bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan that he cannot and will not take strong military action anywhere else.” (Wall Street Journal, 7/28) Gelb says, “If Syria or Iran...stepped up unacceptable military operations in either Iraq or Lebanon, the U.S. could threaten...air attacks against Iranian and Syrian air-defense missiles and radars, air strikes against Iranian naval forces and oil depots, and cross-boarder raids into Syria to disrupt support of Iraqi insurgents.”

Gen. William Odom, former director of the National Security Agency, also sees Iraq policy as key to the problem but draws a different conclusion. “It is precisely our actions in Iraq that have opened the door for Iran and Syria to support Hezbollah and Hamas actions without much to fear from the U.S.” (“Nieman Watch,” Harvard University, 7/17) But Odom (like Rep. Murtha) calls for a U.S. “tactical retreat” from Iraq followed by a wider “counter-offensive” in the Mid-East, uniting the U.S. and “a coalition of the major states of Europe and East Asia.”

In fact, U.S. rulers may not be sure of what to do. It’s not strategic vision they lack; they have oil on the brain. What’s missing for them are masses of people willing to shed blood for U.S. imperialism. Israel’s bosses have the same problem and hesitate to send reservists into Lebanon.

An overlooked aspect of the fighting in Lebanon is the emergence of the eastern Mediterranean as a major oil transit hub. July 13 marked the opening of a U.S.-sponsored one-million-barrel-a-day oil pipeline, originating in the Caspian region and deliberately by-passing Russia, which ends at the Turkish

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French-U.S. Bosses' Current Love Affair

Flashback: February 17, 2003. In San Francisco, 150,000 people rally against the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq. David Harris, a founder of the Vietnam War draft resistance, tells the crowd: "We're here to say 'Thank you, France.'"

Maybe it seemed like the right thing to say. After all, just three days earlier French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin won an ovation when he told the UN Security Council that the use of force against Iraq was unjustified. Within a month, French president Jacques Chirac would threaten to veto UN support for the U.S. invasion.

But today the opposite seems true. France backs the U.S. on every important foreign policy issue: Israel, Iran, North Korea.... On Feb. 9, 2005, the French elite applauded Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she affirmed U.S. police power over "states where corruption and chaos and cruelty reign." That day, a Radio France Internationale reporter summed up France's new position: no timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, support for the Iraqi elections and for NATO intervention in Iraq.

Clearly, the French ruling class was never really committed to fighting against war and imperialism. But French bosses did see the invasion of Iraq as part of a plan to establish uncontested U.S. hegemony worldwide, and leave French bosses with a smaller slice of the world pie, according to Jean-Paul Hébert, a researcher at the school of higher studies in social sciences.

The French bosses thought their European counterparts would follow their lead in opposing the U.S. They were wrong. Former French foreign minister Hubert Védrine ruefully told a Le Monde-hosted internet chat, "The great majority of Europeans [i.e. European bosses] do not want to enter into a logic of being a counterweight [to the U.S.]. They think it's preferable to have good relations with the U.S. in the hope of influencing the U.S., even though that hope is illusory."

When French bosses saw which way the wind was blowing, they then ditched the anti-war movement and budied up to the U.S. bosses. This proves, once again, that the anti-war movement can only rely on the working class

and its soldier and student allies, because they're the sole groups in whose class interest it is to oppose imperialist war.

Any lingering doubts about the bosses' cynicism should consider how the France-U.S. rapprochement evolved, as laid out in a two-page spread in the April 6 Le Monde (the bosses' main newspaper for communicating their ideas to the French elites).

In the Fall of 2003 — just months after the invasion of Iraq — French president Chirac became worried about Syrian efforts to muscle the French bosses out of Lebanon. When Syrian president Bashar al-Assad turned a deaf ear to his protests, Chirac hinted to George Bush at the June 2004 D-Day commemoration that Lebanon needed "democracy." Within two months, Maurice Gourdault-Montague, Chirac's diplomatic advisor, and Condoleezza Rice, then Bush's national security advisor, were huddled together over Rice's laptop, pounding out the UN resolution that forced Syrian troops out of Lebanon.

Ever since, France has been playing "good cop" in the Arab world to the U.S. "bad cop," according to an unnamed French diplomat quoted in Le Monde. French diplomats advise Arab rulers that they [the French] are "restraining" the U.S., but the Arab rulers must toe the line because otherwise the U.S. will clobber them. The French bosses flatter themselves, that they're playing a role in world affairs by acting as U.S. messenger boy (although the destruction of "democratic" Lebanon by the U.S.-backed Israeli fascists might put a glitch in this love affair).

Nevertheless, Le Monde warns that the rapprochement is just a marriage of convenience. And Hubert Védrine warns that "China is...a future major world pole...an increasingly formidable trade rival, maybe an eventual military threat..." Védrine admonishes European bosses to "abandon their naivety" about U.S. intentions because "the world is changing before our eyes: new powers are emerging, a multi-polar world that excludes Europe could develop, China is growing in strength, with all that that implies, etc." Some French bosses want to be free to choose sides in a U.S.-China confrontation.



During the anti-war demonstrations in 2003, many demonstrators thanked France and Germany for opposing the U.S. war in Iraq. Now, both countries are aligned with the U.S. Workers should not ally with any bosses.

The front-runner for the "Socialist" Party nomination, and odds-on winner in next year's French presidential elections, is Ségolène Royale. She advanced her foreign policy aims in a June 22 interview in Le Monde. "Europe must not be on the defensive, but on the offensive," she said, "I deplore the defeatist talk of certain elites."

Once burnt, twice shy: If the French bosses think it's in their interest, they will again break with U.S. imperialism, and again pose as "friends" of the anti-war movement. No imperialist is truly against spilling workers' blood in endless wars for control of the oil that fuels their profit machines. Wars can't be fought by allying with one imperialist gang against another. It can only be done by ending its causes — capitalism and imperialism — and by building a mass revolutionary communist movement. ☛

Whither Cuba? State Capitalism or Back to a U.S. Colony?

Fidel Castro ceded power to his brother Raul Castro after undergoing surgery for intestinal bleeding. Many, particularly in the Bush administration and among Miami's right-wing Cuban exiles, have already announced his death. The question is, whither Cuba after Fidel?

Cuba is not a communist country but rather is state-capitalist retaining some concessions won by workers from the revolution's early stages. But workers don't run Cuba; it is run by the state-capitalist rulers led by Fidel (and now Raúl).

The Miami exiles and the Bush gang want to turn Cuba into a U.S. colony as it was from the 1898 U.S.-Spain war until 1959, when U.S.-backed dictator Batista was ousted. But this scenario is not exactly a given because the world today is not what it used to be 50 years ago when U.S. imperialism basically ruled Latin America and the Caribbean as its backyard. Now many other rivals have landed there: China, European bosses and even Russia — which Fidel turned to when Washington began trying to oust and/or kill him. Russia is making a comeback; witness the recent billion-dollar weapon and trade deal with Venezuela. And local bosses are grabbing their cut, as evidenced by a meeting last month in Argentina of Mercosur, a Latin American free trade group. In Cuba itself, recent discoveries of huge offshore oil reserves have attracted oil company investments from Norway to China (with U.S. oil moguls shut out).

The most probable scenario of a post-Fidel Cuba more likely resembles China or Vietnam, with the current state-capitalist ruling class maintaining power and opening the economy to even more imperialist investments. Some in Miami hope the U.S. will invade Cuba if Fidel dies and provoke chaos there. This could happen, but with the U.S. quagmires in Iraq and Afghanistan (and possibly Lebanon since their Israeli ally's "blitzkrieg" seems to be backfiring), this scenario is not a given either.

Whatever happens, Cuba's workers will not emerge winning. The key element needed right now is a real revolutionary communist leadership to fight for true workers' power. ☛

Imperialism Massacres Workers and Children

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port of Ceyhan, directly north of Israel, Lebanon and Syria. But more important is the 1.6-mbd pipeline from Kirkuk in Iraq that also discharges in Ceyhan. Although insurgents have severely damaged the pipeline, Exxon Mobil lifted 2.1 million barrels of Iraqi crude from Ceyhan in one recent week. (Reuters, 7/29)

Washington, no doubt, expects Israel — which now gets a fifth of its oil through Ceyhan — to increase its naval influence over adjacent shores. The Russians, however, much of whose oil exports enter the Mediterranean through Turkey's nearby Bosphorus strait, have conflicting ideas. They're dredging Syria's Mediterranean port at Tartus, preparing to move the bulk of their Black Sea fleet there from Sevastopol (Kommerzant, Moscow, translated by Global Research, 7/28).

One trap for workers to avoid is rooting for the phony "anti-imperialists" like Hezbollah and Hamas, who actually abet the imperialist designs of Iran, Russia, China and the European Union (EU). Another is falling for the



Arab and Israeli workers demonstrate in Tel Aviv against bombing.

"peace" plans proposed at the UN. The U.S. wants Hezbollah disarmed, and NATO to occupy southern Lebanon. The EU, seconded by Russia and China, wants a UN force, and Hezbollah retained as a foil to Israel and the U.S. All the players here are acting in the deadly self-interests of various sets of capitalists.

As we've constantly pointed out, the international working class has absolutely no interest in siding with any of these murderous bosses. War is widening. We must raise this issue in all our shops, unions, campuses and mass organizations. Building a mass PLP and winning workers in all these areas to red politics is the order of the day. The only road to ending these killer wars is the one leading to communist revolution. Join us. ☛

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.

Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.

Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. **Join Us!**

Contact us
CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
P.O. 808 Brooklyn NY 11202

www.plp.org
email: cd188@juno.com;
phone: 718-630-9440

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Wildcat Strikers Take Over Barcelona Airport, Fight Job Cuts

BARCELONA, Spain, July 31 — Facing the contracting out of 4,000 jobs nationwide, and a do-nothing union leadership, on July 28 hundreds of baggage handlers took matter into their own hands and wildcatted, taking over the El Prat airport here — one of Spain’s largest — blocking runways and preventing all flights from landing or departing.

This was the workers’ answer to the growing attacks against their jobs — similar to those suffered by airport and airline workers and other workers worldwide. AENA, the airport authority, ended its contract with Iberia Airlines. Union leaders told the workers about the looming

job losses but didn’t lift a finger to stop it. Coming smack in the middle of the high summer season, the militant action had a maximum effect, forcing cancellation of hundreds of flights until the bosses agreed to workers’ demands.

Immediately, the bosses took the offensive. An editorial in El País, Spain’s leading liberal newspaper, basically labeled the workers “terrorists,” stating such “savage actions” should be banned.

A judge is now threatening the workers with “crimes against airport security.”

The workers did the right thing, not waiting passively for their union hacks to make a sweetheart deal with the bosses. While the union leaders were holding mass meetings, the workers ran them out and took over the hall, deciding on the wildcat strike.

Workers are fed up with capitalism, making them pay for the bosses’ crises and endless wars. This kind of militant action can become a school for communism if a revolutionary leadership is built among such militant workers. ☸



The wildcat strike by airport workers brought El Prat airport to a halt

Hotel Union Uses Immigration ‘Reform’ to Sidetrack Potential Walkout

LOS ANGELES — Hotel workers in the LAX airport corridor are preparing for a strike this fall, probably together with those in other cities. But the UNITE-HERE union leaders are building a political movement that only benefits the bosses and their war plans.

Hotels like the LAX Hilton pay immigrant workers less than a living wage to boost profits. Housekeepers, servers and others — many from Mexico and Central America — make as little as \$7.60/hour even after 20 years. Health insurance costs up to \$300 monthly. “We want to change the community,” said a server with 19 years on the job. “We want to work one job instead of two, we want to have more time with our families. It’s not just for us, it’s for our kids.”

Hilton and Westin workers are becoming leaders, defying bosses who charge them with “insubordination” for “crimes” like requesting a rule book. When a union activist was suspended recently, 75 co-workers sat down in the cafeteria to support him. When they, too, were suspended for six days, they picketed the hotel daily until the suspensions were lifted.

“People are scared — not of a strike, but of other employees staying inside,” said a union organizer. The union exploits that fear by building reliance on clergy and politicians instead of on the workers themselves. A recent march began with hundreds of enthusiastic workers chanting loudly but ended with staged arrests of a dozen clergy and other supporters in front of the Hilton, amid a massive, intimidating police presence. As the hotel workers drifted away, most of the energy disappeared.

UNITE-HERE doesn’t expect a strike to win anything so they work closely with the City Council to legally extend the “living wage” ordinance now covering the airport to cover the nearby hotels. At best, that could raise wages to \$10/hour — still not enough to support a family here, even with two wage-earners working full time!

This small step — which the bosses can wipe out easily by raising health premiums — would come at tremendous political cost. When workers rely on politicians, they tie themselves to the same capitalist system that causes their exploitation. This is UNITE-HERE’s plan for LAX hotel workers.

So far, it has mobilized workers around immediate issues: insufficient staff or equipment, speed-up, no breaks, no respect, high cost of health insurance. But with a multi-state hotel strike likely, union leaders are redirecting workers’ militancy into supporting liberal rulers’ “immigration reform.”

New union literature highlights the “American Dream,” denied to hotel workers, and calls for a “pathway to citizenship” to supposedly make this dream a reality. What lies! Across the U.S., tens of millions of citizen-workers realize that life under capitalism is a nightmare, not a dream.

This “pathway to citizenship” (actually an obstacle course) is the main distinction between the Hagel-Martinez Senate immigration bill and the Sensenbrenner House bill. It’s a cruel trick designed to build patriotism among immigrant workers so they’ll fill the huge holes in the bosses’ military. As CHALLENGE has noted, the U.S. military desperately needs “more boots on the ground” and immigration is likely to be the only source of population growth in the 18-24 age group for some time. UNITE-HERE’s “American Dream” campaign is playing right into their hands. Witness the “democracy” U.S. rulers and their Israeli lieutenants are bringing to workers from Baghdad to Beirut!

“I never thought of the connection between immigration and war before,” said one hotel worker, “but it really does make sense.” Imperialist wars and all other curses of capitalism can only be ended with communist revolution. That’s why CHALLENGE readers must spread this paper to more hotel workers. We must mobilize our friends and co-workers to bring these important ideas to the picket lines, to workers’ homes, and to the September 28 march on the Hilton headquarters in Beverly Hills. The bosses are fighting for the loyalty of these workers. We must fight back. ☸

THOUSANDS OF DISSIDENT WORKERS MARCH IN VENEZUELA

CARACAS, July 19 — Thousands of trade unionists marched to the National Assembly today, demanding respect for workers’ rights. This was not a right-wing action but one organized by a militant caucus opposing the hacks leading the UNT (the Union Federation formed by pro-Chavez union leaders to counter the CTV, the virtually defunct pro-U.S. and pro-AFL-CIO federation). Other mass organizations joined the march.



The workers were protesting the constant violations of union contracts by private and government bosses, firings, low wages and the lack of job security. They also opposed joint ventures by the government with private international oil companies which attack energy workers. The marchers also defended workers who have seized plants abandoned by their bosses.

However, these workers, including the dissident militant C-CURA caucus inside the UNT), still have many illusions in Chavez’s so-called “Bolivarian Socialism of the 21st Century.” This is a deadly mistake. Workers need to build their own revolutionary leadership and fight for real workers power without any bosses — communism. ☸

ANTI-RACIST VICTORY

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Interaction with workers on Long Island confirms that despite the constant bombardment of patriotic garbage generated by rulers both here and in Latin America, a deep reserve of internationalist sentiment persists in the broader working class. A creeping suspicion of liberals and Congress also persists. We must substantiate this through painstaking base-building in the heat of struggle.

We don’t welcome arrests but neither shall fear of them paralyze us. To be attacked by the enemy is a good thing. We’re learning that workers won to communist ideas are the ultimate and only power which can smash the capitalists and their courts, cops and jails. Each fight is an opportunity to reveal the enemy’s weaknesses, a chance to learn and grow on a more solid basis than before. ☸

LATINO WORKERS REJECT LIBERALS, PLEDGE TO PACK COURTROOM

On July 14, two defendants and several friends were well-received at an action meeting/forum organized by the Workplace Project, an organization providing legal and other services to workers on Long Island. Panelists reviewed legislation pending in Congress as well as urged voting and unity between blacks and Latinos.

One defendant questioned the panelists as to why they recommended voting as the next phase of the “migrants’ rights movement” if the same imperialists who want to send Latino youth to the Mid-East and who exploit Latin America are the ones who will pass the more liberal immigration bill some hope for. While the workers gathered that evening applauded the question delivered in Spanish), the same wasn’t true for any of the panelists’ answers.

Several attendees agreed to help pack the courtroom for the defense case and closing arguments and they did. ☸

new orleans summer project

CHALLENGE A Weapon to Unite Workers, Reject Divisive Nationalism

Seven young Washington, D.C. students and workers went to New Orleans with a group that prioritizes resident empowerment and brings displaced residents back to the city.

We had many sharp political discussions. The highlights of the trip were the levee tour (see next issue) and CHALLENGE sales.

We sold CHALLENGE to day laborers at Lowe's Hardware store, speaking to several workers about uniting black residents with super-exploited workers from Latin America. Anxieties over our Spanish skills dissolved once we began talking with the workers. Although not everyone in our group spoke Spanish, the workers still appreciated the effort and support from everyone. They were very receptive to the ideas and took about 10 papers for fellow workers. One man from Mexico said, "So how do we get together to work on this?" He gave us his name and number, as did two other workers.

The Iberville Project residents were also very receptive. Some had already seen the paper, giving us hope for sustainable Party work here. We spoke with some young

men interested in the Middle East situation and in growing fascism here. They said the U.S. was trying to "take over" resources there. One talked about the cops' harassment of black people, specifically of those in the projects. We distributed 15 CHALLENGES. Three people asked us to contact them about talking politics and taking action.

We also discussed black nationalism and fighting racism. Some volunteers we met have a black nationalist outlook. One stressed that black people should do most of the talking with residents door to door, while white workers in the group should stay in the background taking notes. Our multi-racial group was turned off by this idea. Some people thought black residents wouldn't talk to white workers. This directly contradicted our positive experience with Latino workers at Lowe's and black workers at the Iberville Projects.

While the group we worked in focuses on building black leadership, an important goal, and while black workers will surely be leaders of the revolutionary communist struggle, no revolution can succeed without a unified multi-racial fight against racism and capitalism. Hopefully, as the



Volunteers gutting homes in New Orleans

organization develops able black leadership, a sharp political struggle for communist politics within the organization will point in a winning direction.

This experience strengthened our collective and built communist ideas in the future PLP'ers who came with us. We encourage everyone considering going to New Orleans to go, not only with the idea of easing suffering, but of ending it altogether with communist revolution. ☸

Power of Working Class Shines Amid Fascist Repression

July 28 — "I think the whole system is designed to keep us down — from the schools to the jails — not just FEMA and the storm. It's the whole rotten system." So declared an angry black working-class resident in the devastated area called New Orleans East.

A group of teachers, parents and student volunteers traveled to this city to work, learn and participate in its sharp class struggle. Our multi-racial contingent spent a week gutting homes, visiting displaced residents, viewing Katrina's destruction and getting to know other volunteers.

We learned many valuable political lessons, the key one being the power of the working class. We saw what we could do by sharing tasks, helping each other and making decisions collectively. We also saw how strong many of the residents were who continue to fight, organize and speak their minds as they try to rebuild their lives and communities.

We met residents from the Iberville Projects who took back their apartments, and residents from New Orleans East whose homes were demolished and who were open to organizing groups such as the Survivors Councils. We met others who were courageous during Katrina and who saved neighbors' and friends' lives, contrary to the racist images the media portrayed.

We saw the growth of fascism with our own eyes — while much of the city is abandoned and strewn with debris (including asbestos), the National Guard is patrolling in army vehicles, pulling over residents, mostly young black men. There's a curfew and few if any services



for those who have returned. While there is a growing grassroots movement to encourage residents to come home ("the right of return"), it's clear that the ruling class continues to force those who do return to live in deplorable conditions.

The majority of homes in the Lower Ninth Ward are still abandoned and have signs spray-painted on them by FEMA marking the number of dead and living people and animals found upon inspection last September.

We also had great discussions with volunteers, residents and Summer Project staff at work sites and at daily evening meetings on grassroots organizing, a vanguard movement, nationalism and class, and about what it means to devote your life to changing society. High schools students led an evening workshop on the role of sexism.

The Project here is very much focused on high school students, revealing how they are an important ally of the working class and how willing some young people are to do hard work, to grapple with political ideas and to fight back! We pledged to return to New Orleans this winter with even larger contingents and to continue to show our solidarity with the struggling workers there. ☸

PLP Anti-Racist Base Can Unite Katrina Victims Against Bosses' System

New Orleans is symbolic of both the utter callousness of the capitalists and the matchless collective spirit of the working class. It's a situation which exemplifies both the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead to winning working people to PLP's communist politics.

Terry, a woman living here in the middle-income neighborhood of Gentilly, told us her story. Because Gentilly is not on a flood plain, Terry and some of her neighbors stayed to wait for Katrina to pass. They'd been through hurricanes before. However, they hadn't known that the canals surrounding the neighborhood would overflow when the levee broke several miles away.

As Terry walked through her house to get her family out, the water rose from her knees to her neck in minutes. Her family, along with about 50 neighbors, took shelter in a two-story house. Her son and his friend, both over 6 feet, rescued 17 people, including three children, one a baby. Terry and her neighbors were rescued from the second floor and taken to the Superdome.

She described the conditions we've all heard about: no bathrooms, no food, no water. National Guardsmen first told them they couldn't leave but later, when they managed to get outside, they were told they couldn't go back in. They slept on the sidewalk. Eventually, they were bussed to San Antonio. She said she would have stayed there, but her mother wanted to come "home."

Many New Orleanians want to return to the only home they've ever known. However, the city, state, and

federal governments — racist to the core — are making that next to impossible for poor black people.

Several Chicago students and teachers traveled here recently to help organize people who want to fight for the right of return. It was an amazing experience.

In addition to Terry, we heard many other stories highlighting the complete disregard by the ruling class towards people in the path of Katrina, especially the most disadvantaged. Those left behind to die were the same people who this system has always treated as disposable — not just here, but everywhere. Many Chicagoans noted the similarities between the plan to use Katrina to turn New Orleans into a whiter, wealthier city and Mayor Daley's gentrification schemes for Chicago.

Although we saw many horrors and heard many stories of governmental abuse and neglect, we also had reason for hope. Thousands of volunteers are here from across the U.S. Despite living under a capitalist system, where profits are valued above people, these volunteers have come during the hot Gulf Coast summer to help gut houses, feed people, and provide other services. Many New Orleanians are fighting the government's refusal to let them rebuild their homes. There are beginnings of unity between black and immigrant workers. Building an anti-racist base for PLP can solidify this unity and point out to Katrina's victims both the source of their plight — capitalism — and the solution: workers power. ☸

Teachers Challenge Pro-War AFT Hacks

BOSTON, July 25 — The leadership of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) used the union's international convention here to justify the bombing and invasion of Lebanon by Israel, helping to pave the way for major war in the Middle East. More than 1,000 delegates voted against the leadership's pro-war proposal.

Many had read the 500 CHALLENGES and 5,000 daily CHALLENGE flyers distributed by PLP'ers, with an editorial each day on that day's topic. The literature included PLP's advocacy of revolutionary communism and our position on many other issues like inter-imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and China; liberal politicians as the main fascist danger; and the racist nature of the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) as well as of the debate on immigration. CHALLENGE was well-received by the delegates; when one resolution (on China) was being debated on the floor, many delegates were poring over our newspaper.

More than 3,000 delegates were in the hall when the President introduced a special order of business on "State-Sponsored Terrorism and the Crisis in the Middle East." Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran were

microphones but debate was shut down in fifteen minutes. The leadership's move follows its consistent support for U.S. imperialist foreign policy by promoting patriotism and anti-communism while trying to steer the membership into the arms of the Democratic Party. Sen. Edward Kennedy was a featured speaker and was introduced as "a great friend of labor," a "friend" who is one of the main sponsors of legislation viciously attacking immigrant workers and whose colleagues like Hillary Clinton want to send even more troops into the Iraq quagmire. (More on Kennedy's role in our next issue.)

During the past two years anti-war sentiment has grown within the union and resolutions condemning the war in Iraq have been presented at state and national conventions. This year four locals submitted resolutions which not only criticized the Bush administration but also the various ways the U.S. is trying to control the Middle East for economic and political reasons. They called for immediate withdrawal.

Right-wing forces centered in the New York State delegation tried to counter these efforts by intro-

ducing Resolution #31 which criticizes Bush but not the system. Progressive forces could not defeat #31 within committee but, after sharp debate, amended it to include the phrase "oppose the war" and to call for the removal of all U.S. bases and troops in Iraq.

The passage of amended #31 produced mixed reactions, some feeling that in and of itself this was a victory but actually the real victory was PLP'ers influencing the debate with our anti-imperialist communist position. A major step forward was the formation at this convention of an AFT Peace and Justice Caucus with 130 delegates signing up. This new group has the potential to become a significant mass organization if it reaches out to union members, engaging in anti-war struggles in the schools in between conventions, as well as fighting the racist educational system which, in NYC for instance, had produced the most segregated schools in the country.

PLP members must introduce communist politics into this Caucus, championing reliance on the masses, not on the AFT leadership and their friends in the Democratic Party. (More next issue.) ☸



Anti-Racist, Anti-War Resolutions At AFSCME Convention

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees' (AFSCME) international leadership plans to spend the second week of August at its Chicago convention fighting to get a dues increase. Although U.S. workers face the growth of fascism and the specter of more and wider imperialist wars in the Middle East and elsewhere, the pro-capitalist union "leaders" agenda is about fattening their business's bottom line.

Many workers understand the need to speak about, and act against, the horrors confronting our class here and worldwide. In AFSCME's New York City District Council 37, affiliated locals have passed several resolutions on such issues as the ongoing racist disaster in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast; immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq; and supporting immigrant rights while attacking both the Sensenbrenner and McCain-Kennedy Bills.

Such resolutions, even if passed, won't change the world, but the struggle over what ideas should lead the working class is part of that change. Many delegates, like those in the locals which passed these three resolutions, honestly want to act on the problems we face.

Therefore, it is crucial for our co-workers to understand that these problems cannot be solved by electing "good politicians," or by trying to reform that which can't be reformed. They are inherent in the profit system. Our goal must be to destroy it. Progressive Labor Party will be offering our revolutionary communist solutions for their consideration. ☸

DeMOCKracy in Iraq: Three Strikers Murdered in Kurdistan

Iraqi Kurdistan, run by pro-U.S. hacks, has a reputation for being free of the daily butchery flooding the rest of the U.S.-occupied country. But it seems this doesn't apply to workers fighting back. On July 27, police and "security" forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) opened fire on 700 workers on strike against the Tasloja Cement Factory near Suleimanyan. Three workers were murdered and 16 were injured.

The strikers were demanding higher wages and the re-hiring of 300 fired workers. The cops and security forces dealt with these workers as if they were "insurgents."

But what else can be expected from the (PUK) rulers? They've committed the same atrocities for years against anyone opposing their capitalist masters (several of the PUK leaders are millionaires).

This is the kind of "democratic freedom" the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys are imposing on the workers of the Middle East. ☸

NY City Workers: Red Politics Can Expose 'Coalition of Sellouts' and War Contract

NEW YORK CITY, July 18 — When District Council 37 of AFSCME announced a new contract covering nearly half the city's workforce, it signaled an attempt by the Bloomberg administration to impose its terms on all other city unions. Its 10% wage increase over 32 months barely keeps pace with inflation, and only seems like an "advance" when compared to the last contract — ZERO percent for one year. Although touted as a "no-give-back" contract, it retains the two-tier give-back initiated in the last contract which pays new workers lower wages for their first two years. All this clears the decks for billionaire mayor Bloomberg to launch a campaign to wring give-backs from pensions and health benefits down the road.

Bloomberg's ruling class is driven to force such cuts in workers' conditions because of U.S. capitalism's problems worldwide: competition from imperialist rivals in Europe, China and Japan; a huge trade deficit; a losing quagmire in Iraq costing hundreds of billions; and an exploding war in the Middle East by imperialist clients sending the cost of oil skyrocketing. All this is impelling the ruling class to break unions and make workers pay for the bosses' crisis. This is fascism at the workplace.

The rulers' primary defense against working-class revolt is their state power — laws, courts, police, military — and their ideological control through their media and schools. But to avoid exposing the state (their government) as a dictatorship of capital, they have the union leaders to contain class struggle within the limits of the contract, head off or limit strikes and win workers to think they must accept their lot.

As "leaders" who defend the profit system, they are pro-capitalist agents of the bosses in the workers' ranks. Therefore, they must get workers to knuckle under to the bosses' need to save their system on the workers' backs. Knowing that there is "widespread grumbling among municipal workers" (NY Times, 7/13), these union lieutenants of the bosses look for ways to keep the wraps on this anger. So 20 other unions in the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC) — about half the city's workforce — declared they will bargain "together" to counter any "pattern" set by DC 37. Already the city bosses are hinting they might not even negotiate with such

a "coalition."

But this dancing back and forth between these two "sides" is designed to try to pull the wool over the rank-and-file's eyes. As the Times says, this MLC move "is partly a response to" that "widespread grumbling." When bargaining individually, union leaders like Randi Weingarten, MLC head and president of the teachers union, have been selling out their membership for years. A big coalition of 20 such hacks will only produce a bigger sellout.

Riding off the rank-and-file unity that developed in the transit strike, these union fakers hope that putting forward the tactic of 20 unions bargaining together will lead workers to think such unity will produce a better contract. But this is not rank-and-file unity; it is unity of the bosses' agents to head off workers' anger and save the "leaders" skins.

Real working-class unity can only flow from leadership that defies the bosses' system, red leadership. Some of that has been provided among city workers throughout PLP's existence. This is leadership that not only stands ready to break the bosses' laws, but also points out that reforms cannot solve problems inherent in capitalism, a system that puts profits first and workers on the garbage heap.

This unity also includes multi-racial unity, and a fight against racism, given that a huge number, if not a majority, of the city workers are black and Latino. These union misleaders have never led a concerted struggle against the racist bosses who have oppressed city workers and students, especially the black and Latino majority.

Victory in this contract struggle means spreading the revolutionary ideas of CHALLENGE which will help workers unite to fight the bosses, not bow to them, and will win workers to understand that only destroying the system and replacing it with workers power — communism — can solve our problems. This means expanding the circulation of the paper, developing more networks of CHALLENGE distributors, recruiting more workers to study-action groups and to joining PLP. Unity growing out of that kind of struggle is the opposite of the union leaders' "unity," which unites with the bosses' system. ☸



Con Ed Profits From Workers Misery

The suffering, hardship and death in Queens, NY, along with new outages on NYC's Staten Island and the over 100 heat-related deaths in California all due to power blackouts continue the bosses' war on the working class. The growing fascist control and manipulation of the news we get turns the world upside down and distorts the truth, from Iraq to New Orleans to Queens. What about the thousands of 100-year-old feeder cables rotting because of no repair or replacement? What about the billions Con Ed bills us for while they warn us of power shortages and tell us to cut back on our use of electricity, a basic need to sustain life in the cities?

In a city boasting one of the greatest concentrations of wealth in the world, with the country's biggest utility — possessing \$25 billion in assets and \$12 billion in annual revenues — working-class families are forced to throw out food and go without lights or air conditioning in 95-degree weather, especially the aged and sick.

Electric power, like all capitalist products, is a commodity sold for profit. When the cost of building new generation plants and maintaining the infrastructure cuts into profits, the utilities slash supply and have reduced the workforce by 35% over 20 years, down to skeleton crews barely capable of making repairs when neglected equipment fails. When the City-owned, bondholder-controlled transit system was denied fare increases, it followed the same scenario until major derailments and service disruptions forced workers to approve a staggering bond issue providing billions in new taxes to rebuild the system.

Now it seems Con Ed may be going the same route. Money the government used to give them and other utilities now finances dozens of wars launched or sponsored by the U.S. ruling class to protect their profits and dominance.

Fascism is increasing because the bosses fear workers' growing unrest and anger at their rotten system that extracts profits from workers' misery and death. Con Ed fed us misinformation for almost two weeks, saying the power loss was a "minor problem" involving a few hundred people; then it became 1,800; then 25,000 and finally 100,000. If one adds homes and apartments with reduced voltage affecting lights, air conditioning and elevators, the figures reach 200,000 victims of Con Ed profiteering. But just as Con Ed turns truth from day to night, workers organizing for revolution will change capitalist night into a communist day.

A COMRADE

Campus Workers Unite Against Boss's Squeeze

The class struggle is picking up at my NYC campus. The bosses are squeezing the workers — what few remain after a round of firings — for more and more work. The bosses are also using all their tricks to reduce costs.

However, recently all the members of one crew began fighting back, signing a letter to the "big boss" complaining about the workload. Standing together will make us stronger and enable us to resist attacks. The "big boss" sent quite a nasty letter in return, but our point got across.

At this jobsite a modest number of workers are reading CHALLENGE and being confronted with revolutionary communist ideas. Although this reform struggle seems small, the ideas in CHALLENGE are shaping this into a revolutionary one. While the class struggle continues with or without communist ideas, the responsibility lies with communists to bring red ideas to the fore and fight for political leadership of the working class.

For example, in this struggle it is crucial to point out that given the new social contract (fascism) under which we live, conditions will worsen. No matter how hard we fight or what few reforms we may win, our gains will be taken away. Workers here and everywhere must realize that only through communist revolution can we end the misery we face on and off the job.

YOUNG RED WORKER

Reds True Fighters Against Anti-Semitism

The Sunday NY Times Book Review (7/23) carried a review of Jan Gross's book, "Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz," by David Margolick, which slandered communists, the real fighters against anti-Semitism. The review says the following about the July 4, 1946 murderous anti-Semitic attack, or "pogrom," when Poles murdered 42 Jews in the Polish city of Kielce, a year after World War II ended:

"Days before the pogrom, the Polish primate, Cardinal August Hlold, had spurned Jewish entreaties to condemn Roman Catholic anti-Semitism. Afterward, he charged that by leading the effort to impose Communism on Poland — Jews were in fact prominent in the party, though hardly in control — the Jews had only themselves to blame. The point was seconded by the bishop of Kielce, who suggested that Jews had actually orchestrated the unrest to persuade Britain to hand over Palestine. It was a neat trick: being Communists and Zionists simultaneously. Only the bishop of Czestochowa condemned the killings, and was promptly reprimanded by his colleagues. One wonders how Karol



Wojtyla, then a young seminarian, later Pope John Paul II, viewed this cesspool of ignorance and intolerance."

So the Roman Catholic Church, evidently including the later "saintly" Pope Karol Wojtyla, either did nothing or actively blamed the Jews themselves! Then Margolick says, "If the Church gave the Jews short shrift, the same was true of the Communists, even the Jewish ones. For them, ignoring the Jewish plight, as well as Polish complicity in wartime atrocities, offered a way to ingratiate themselves with a wary nation."

This is a lie. The communists did NOT "ignore the Jewish plight." Margolick has to know — but fails to mention — that Polish and Soviet communist leaders moved swiftly to severely punish those responsible for the murderous anti-Semitic pogrom. They compelled everyone in Kielce, 10,000 people, to watch the funeral procession for those murdered Jews.

Five days later, the communists put 38 pogrom participants on trial. Nine were sentenced to death and executed on July 12, 1946. (*See bottom for website source.)

Evidently the Times' reviewer felt compelled to hide the fact that the communists fought anti-Semitism with a determination unmatched by the Western Allies.

Like Poland, pre-war Hungary was a fascist dictatorship in which anti-Semitism, along with other forms of racism against minorities (Rumanians in Hungary, Ukrainians in Poland) was institutionalized. During the 1930's and '40's the communist movement) opposed anti-Semitism more strongly than any other political force (including the Zionist movement). As former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem

Begin wrote in 1951: "The Soviet Government fought anti-Semitism with characteristic pertinacity.... The truth is that the Soviet Government is anti-anti-Semitic."

Naturally many Jews were attracted to the communist movement. Many welcomed the Red Army after the war and joined various communist parties. Many communist leaders in Hungary as elsewhere were Jewish. Historically, communists have always led the fight against all forms of racism.

A RED HISTORY BUFF

French Reader Gets Kick Out of Anti-Racist Football Article

When the latest issue of CHALLENGE arrived, I told my usually apolitical 18-year-old son about the article on the soccer star Zidane, and he said, "You're putting me on." I said, "No," and we immediately read the article together.

We discussed it — he knows all about the racism of the Italian soccer clubs — and I didn't even know he took an interest in the matter! So, one small testimony that printing this story was an excellent idea.

Zidane's backing off from charging racism breaks the rhythm of the article, but facts are stubborn things; we live in a complex world. It's important to know that there are limits to how far millionaire soccer players will go.

A FRIEND IN FRANCE

Israeli Move Part of U.S. Plan?

I believe the Aug. 2 CHALLENGE editorial contains a misunderstanding of Israeli motives for invading Lebanon. Israel has not acted on its own volition. Since mounting an action of this magnitude requires extensive organization, it is likely that this conflict is the U.S.-planned prelude to the bombing and subsequent invasion of Iran. When Israel "decides" to pursue Hezbollah into Syria, the U.S. hopes to draw Syria into the war; Iran has a defense agreement with Syria. Once Iran enters the war, the U.S. would mount its own invasion from Iraq. This plan is predicated on the "cooperation" of the ruling classes in Syria and Iran.

LONG-TIME READER

CHALLENGE Comment: The U.S. does not seem to be prepared to invade Iran at this point, considering its problems controlling Iraq (having to send still more troops into Baghdad). While your predictions about the consequences of these attacks are true, it's difficult to be certain whether the U.S. is behind the attacks or whether Israel is acting for its own interests and hoping the U.S. will allow them to continue, assuming it benefits the U.S. ruling class.

In Memoriam for Richard

After months of suffering, a co-worker of mine passed away in June. Living much of his life with diabetes and heart disease, Richard spent his last months in a nursing home, paralyzed and bed-ridden, finally dieing of a heart attack.

Richard and I worked together as parking lot attendants at a downtown sports stadium. Our jobs were to ensure that patrons paid the parking fee set by the city. Essentially, we were the city's gatekeepers, hired to protect the bosses' property. Unfortunately, neither the sports stadium nor his previous employer afforded him the same protection in his time of need.

Laid off from an aircraft company after 20 years of service, Richard ended up at the sports stadium, and, like most of his co-workers, worked several other part-time jobs in order to pay the bills. Battling diabetes and heart disease, Richard needed several medications. However, after being laid off he was barely able to afford them.

To make matters worse, both his mother and sister were also suffering from similar health complications. Money became so tight that the family could no longer afford the medication for all three. In a selfless act, Richard stopped taking his own medication so that his mother and sister could take theirs.

In the end, it wasn't the diseases themselves that took Richard's life, but the capitalist profit system that forces workers to choose between saving their own lives and those of their family's. A system that fires people after decades of service, forces them into low-wage part-time work and then denies them access to health care does not deserve to exist.

Such stories as Richard's are only too common nowadays. We should not forget the workers who have died at the hands of this unjust system, but let their memory be our resolve to fight for a communist future.

Richard, you will be missed.

SOUTHERN RED

*www.itartass.com/level2.html?NewsID=10603773; <http://www.religare.rulmonitoring31367.htm>)

Communist School Stresses Crucial Role of Industrial Workers

LOS ANGELES, July 31 — The last three weeks of our 2006 Summer Project demonstrated the potential for organizing a revolution and a communist society through a series of communist schools, study groups, leafleting, CHALLENGE sales and developing closer ties. The schools were memorable and vital, attended by up to 30-plus people at each. Two people joined PLP; many others are seriously considering it.

In one school, an industrial worker stressed the importance of young comrades becoming factory workers, citing the revolutionary potential of industrial workers. This coincided with our leafleting at many plants. He also suggested a “work-in,” where those interested would find temporary factory jobs for a better understanding of industrial work, even if not doing it long-term. His description of developing ties with co-workers provided a better feel for doing industrial work.

We also heard presentations on the history of PLP, on immigration, and on racism and its roots in capitalism and imperialism. We discussed New Orleans and the need for multi-racial unity against racism, an attack on the whole working class as well as the need for communism and dialectics. We also analyzed the current Middle East crisis — a sharpening quagmire rooted in inter-imperialist rivalry and many local bosses’ greed for more oil profits. The war in Lebanon is a murderous example of this rivalry and possible omen of a coming world war. All this highlighted the necessity for even more dedication in

building our party.

We had struggles over collectivity and contradiction between reform and revolution, understanding that while participating in reform struggles, it’s an illusion to think they’ll lead to revolution.

With consistent, day-to-day, hard work of building personal-political relationships and with genuine political and ideological struggle for communism (including a wider distribution of CHALLENGE), we will be able to bring our friends closer to the party. We’re learning that it’s not enough to just push for militant anti-imperialist politics. Grasping the primacy of a communist outlook will increase participation in events such as the Summer Project and building networks of CHALLENGE-DESAFIO, necessary to sustain our Party and movement. Many of us are realizing that fighting for communism is not a sacrifice — it’s in our class interest. We will lead more fulfilling lives from our experiences as communist organizers. A proper struggle can only strengthen us on an individual level and as a Party on a collective level.

Our communist school has inspired future study groups with more widespread leadership from among our comrades and our close friends as a result of these struggles here. We plan more anti-racist activity and will emerge from this even stronger. ☺

Mexican Elections Won’t Change Workers’ Lives

[The following was accidentally omitted from our last issue — Ed.]

Oaxaca’s militant teachers have returned to work. They were pressured by the media’s claim that if the teachers “care” about the students, they’ll go back to work while negotiating their contract. The section below was written while the strike was still on.)

OAXACA, MEXICO, July 14 — “The Teachers’ Struggle is Also the Workers’ Struggle!”; “Long live Communism; Death to Capitalism!” olk,0

These were some of the slogans chanted by many people in the mega-march of 500,000 people in Oaxaca supporting the teachers.

The PRD and its candidate, Obrador Lopez, have promised to spend more money on education, scholarships for the poor, and pensions for the elderly and other reforms. Even if he had won the election and slightly limited the huge profits of Mexico’s bosses and the imperialists, the lives of Mexican workers would not be changed significantly. As the competition increases between local capitalists on the one hand and the imperialists on the other, workers are sinking into greater poverty. ☹



Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers.
Abbreviations: NYT = New York Times, GW Guardian Weekly (UK) WP = Washington Post

Officers s order in Iraqi: kill all able men

Military prosecutors last month accused four soldiers in the unit of releasing three Iraqi men they captured that day, only to kill them....

But the lawyers are...making a more startling claim: that the soldiers were given explicit orders before the raid to “kill all military-age males” they encountered.

The lawyers say that two senior officers — a colonel and a captain — have acknowledged that they gave that order, as have other men in the same company. (NYT, 7/23)

Imperialist boundaries poison Mid-East

...For the optimists hoping that war in the Middle East will soon end so the rebuilding can commence, there is a serious problem....

Boundaries between many countries of the Middle East, like those in Africa, were...put together...by European colonizers who...lumped enemies together on purpose, hoping that ethic hatreds might reduce anticolonial feelings....A new study....compares the performance of countries with natural borders to those with artificial ones and finds, overwhelmingly that artificial nations suffer terribly — lower income, horribly ineffective and corrupt governments, less respect for the law, low literacy, limited access to clean water, poor health care, you name it.

...And having oil wealth is unlikely to save the day. Fragmented countries with natural resources often do worse because civil war rages over who gets to keep the money. Some of the poorest countries in Africa, for example, are actually quite well endowed with diamonds and other resources. (NYT, 7/20)

Nixon adviser says fascism is real threat

John Dean, the White House counsel who warned Richard Nixon 32 years ago that Watergate was “a cancer growing on the presidency,” was back in town the other night....

“What is at the end of the road in America,” he said, “is a proto-fascist type attitude.”...“We have a very real pos-

sibility in this country of getting on that road. We’re not very far from it. It wouldn’t take a very sharp turn.”

His observations, Dean said, are based on many discussions with social scientists... (Tribune Media SVC., 7/16)

For a good person to do evil, takes religion?

In “Breaking the spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon,” Daniel C. Dennett, a philosopher and theorist of cognition at Tufts, refers again and again to the “brave” researchers (including himself) who challenge religion. In “The God Delusion,” Richard Dawkins, a professor of the public understanding of science at Oxford, once again likens religious faith to a disease and sets as his goal convincing his readers that atheism is “a brave” aspiration....

...As the (atheist) physicist Steven Weinberg has famously put it,...good people tend to do good, evil people tend to do evil, but for a good person to do evil — “that takes religion.” (NYT, 7/25)

Dixie Chicks say religion keeps us down

The Dixie Chicks...Lead singer Natalie Maines belts it out: “Dust bowl. Bible Belt. Got more churches than trees. Raise me, praise me, couldn’t save me. Couldn’t keep me on my knees.” (Liberal opinion, 7/26)

Judge bars Wal-Mart workers health \$

Wal-mart won a major legal victory when a federal judge in the US struck down a Maryland state law requiring large retailers to provide minimal levels of health insurance. (GW, 8/3)

IRS firing auditors who find rich cheaters

The federal government is moving to eliminate the jobs of nearly half of the lawyers at the Internal Revenue Service who audit tax returns of some of the wealthiest Americans, specifically those who are subject to gift and



estate taxes....

Estate tax Lawyers are the most productive tax law enforcement personnel at the I.R.S.,...For each hour they work, they find an average of \$2,200 of taxes that people owe the government. (NYT, 7/23)

US-Israel axis devastates Lebanon

The United Nations estimates that between 500,000 and 700,000 Lebanese have been displaced, a giant number for a country of 3.5 million....people are stranded without food, power and in some towns, clean water.

“we have between 20 and 25 percent of our population that is turned into refugees. What government can cope with that?” (NYT, 7/29)

The poor pay extra for what they buy

Drivers from low-income neighborhoods of New York, Hartford and Baltimore, insuring identical cars and with the same driving records as those from middle-class neighborhoods, paid \$400 more on average for a year’s insurance.

The poor are also the main customers for appliances and furniture at “rent to own” stores, where payments are stretched out at very high interest rates; in Wisconsin, a \$200 television can end up costing \$700.

Those were just two examples among several cited in a report Tuesday showing that poor urban residents frequently pay hundreds if not thousands of dollars a year in extra costs for everyday necessities... a “ghetto tax.” (NYT, 7/19)

70 Years Ago Spain's Workers Led Fight Against Fascism

July 18 marked the 70th anniversary of the fascist uprising begun by Franco and other generals against Spain's Republican government. The Spanish Civil War was the first harbinger in Europe of World War II (along with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and the Japanese fascist's attack on Manchuria in the early 1930's).

Even though Spain was a weak capitalist country, its banking system was very strong (as it is now). And the banks extended its capital to all branches of production. Spain's colonies in Africa and its neutrality during World War I helped create huge financial institutions like HispanoAmericano Bank, Bank Vizcaya and Bank Bilbao. The merging of finance capital with the landed aristocracy created a financial oligarchy, turning Spain into a small imperialist country (so labeled by Spain's Communist Party in the 1920's and '30's).

But this capitalist development also sparked a very militant and class-conscious working class. In Oct. 1934, the fascist CEDA party entered the government. CEDA didn't hide its sympathy for the Nazis. It was widely expected that CEDA would follow Hitler's example in using parliament to introduce an authoritarian regime. But many Spanish workers were determined not to fall prey to the disaster that had divided the German labor movement.

Following the heroic February 1934 uprising of Austrian workers in Vienna, in a vain attempt to stop the semi-fascist Dollfuss from entering that government, the watchword of Spanish anti-fascists had become "Better Vienna than Berlin", referring to Hitler's rise to power by parliamentary maneuvers. Nowhere was the radicalization of the Spanish workers movement clearer than in the ranks of the Socialist Party (PSOE). Under rank-and-file pressure, its strategy of reformist gradualism was being replaced by calls for revolution.

A general strike was called. In Asturias, in northern Spain, miners rose in armed insurrection and formed militias which laid siege to most of the province's Civil Guard (police) posts. In the mining town of Mieres, the

Provincial Revolutionary Committee announced to a wildly enthusiastic crowd the founding of the Socialist Republic.

The local Workers' Alliance Committees organized every aspect of life, from food distribution and hospitals to transport and communications. A makeshift war industry was rapidly established. Factories began to turn out armored vehicles, weapons and ammunition. The workers even produced a benzol substitute for petrol, made from coal. "Red Guards" were organized to ensure revolutionary order; looters were strictly dealt with and well-known right-wingers were arrested.

Women were heavily involved at all levels, many joining the militias. The miners had few arms and relied on those captured from government forces or arms factories; they suffered from a chronic shortage of ammunition. The insurrection's principal weapon was dynamite; its adept use enabled the miners to inflict humiliating defeats on the opposing army.

In the mountain passes, giant catapults hurled the dynamite at the enemy. In the cities, the dynamiters crept forward while smoking cigars, using them to light hand-held explosive sticks. Once the mining areas had been secured, a column of 1,000 militias was sent to seize the provincial capital of Oviedo. Here, where the local party and union bureaucracy was more dominant, the workers had been slow to rise, but the miners' arrival established revolutionary power in the city's streets. The government forces were quickly driven into a few isolated strongholds.

Meanwhile, troops sent from the capital in Madrid to deal with the rebels met stiff resistance in the region's southern mountain passes. Several hundred miners, armed mainly with dynamite, pinned down one such government force for 12 days. However, the Asturian Commune remained isolated. Much of the Socialist leaders' new-found militancy was only hot air.

Elsewhere in Spain the general strike soon collapsed



due to the passivity of the PSOE leadership and the lack of anarchist union federation support. Only in Catalonia, under revolutionary socialist influence, did the strike begin to take on insurrectionary proportions before being undermined by the half-heartedness of the left nationalists and anarchists.

Such was the optimism of the Asturian workers that news of the failure of the movement elsewhere in Spain was dismissed as government lies. After ten days of desperate resistance, gradually the enemy forces pushed back the 20,000 militias. The government soon decided to smash the movement at all costs. Franco's advancing troops, who had experience crushing colonial revolts in Northern Africa, used prisoners to form human shields and bombed food lines. On October 18, after protracted negotiations, the revolutionaries surrendered. Many workers refused to hand over their arms, either hiding them or fleeing to the mountains to begin a guerrilla struggle.

(Next: the 1936-39 Civil War and how the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent Mexico, were the only forces helping the Republican government, while the U.S., France, Britain, fascist Germany and Italy helped Franco.) ☛

Years After 'Peace Accords' Death Squads Back in El Salvador

EL SALVADOR — On July 5, hundreds of high school students took to the streets protesting a bus fare increase and the high cost of living. They demanded fares be cut in half for students and for people over 60. When the students neared the National University, security police — the UMO (Unit for Maintenance of Order) — assaulted them.

The students defended themselves and a big fight ensued. Police sharpshooters were stationed on adjacent buildings, helicopters flew over the students' heads, shooting indiscriminately, while other cops beat and arrested them. Hundreds from the National Civil Police, including the Group of Police Resistance, surrounded the University, arresting and beating more students.

In the end, two cops were fatally shot and many students and teachers were wounded. Dozens of students were arrested, beaten and tortured in the jails; many have disappeared. The government of Antonio Saca immediately accused the FMLN of being responsible for the demonstrations and the police deaths. But they ignored the poverty, unemployment and repression caused by the government and by capitalism itself.

Ironically, these police units that attacked the demonstrators were created after the "peace" accords between the FMLN leadership and the fascist Salvadoran government. The #2 police official is an ex-guerrilla commander and many of the cops are former guerrillas, who today openly defend the murderous capitalist system. They are just like the old death squads.

"Now we live in a country where

democracy is the main achievement of the peace accords," scream the FMLN leaders. Clearly, since these leaders are paid \$4,000 a month, compared to a farm worker's \$76, it's obvious which class and system they defend.

The Salvadoran working class is fed up with their inhuman conditions. There are daily demonstrations, protests, strikes and confrontations. The working class must understand that the capitalist rulers will do everything possible to keep workers on their knees, including building supposed "leftist" tendencies to confuse them.

Experience has exposed the FMLN's objective of "national liberation" as just another way to exploit and repress the working class. The attack on this and other demonstrations shows how capitalism meets workers' demands: with bullets. This system cannot meet our needs. The fight between workers and bosses is a fight to the death. Our only alternative is the direct fight for communism.

We support the struggles in the streets, strikes and demonstrations against the bosses. There we can expose capitalism and the phony left. Many of these angry workers and students know true communist ideas through our paper, CHALLENGE/DESAFIO, and that future struggles should be not only for fare reductions but for working-class power. Then all wealth we produce will be distributed according to the needs of these same workers, not for the profits of capitalist bosses. ☛

U.S. Rulers Killed 1,000 World War 1 Vets in 1935 'Katrina'

The genocidal response of the Bush administration to Katrina is not new for the U.S. ruling class. And talk about putting soldiers and unemployed veterans in harm's way....

On September 2, 1935, what became known as the Great Labor Day Hurricane ravaged the Florida Keys with winds of 160 miles per hour and gusts up to 200 mph. Between 400 and 600 people, perhaps over a thousand, perished. Among the dead were hundreds of World War I veterans. At the height of the Great Depression these vets had been sent to build a road on the low-lying islands of the Florida Keys as part of the Public Works for Veterans program. While working, they were housed in inadequate tent-like structures provided by the Roosevelt administration. When the National Weather Bureau issued warnings for a hurricane, they were not evacuated.

Shortly afterwards, the editors of the communist literary magazine New Masses asked Ernest Hemingway to write an account of the storm from an insider's perspective. He was living in the area at the time and knew it intimately. Hemingway's response was the article, "Who Murdered the Vets? A First-Hand Report on the Florida Hurricane," published September 17, 1935. Excerpts follow:

Whom did they annoy and to whom was their possible presence a political danger?

Who sent them down to the Florida Keys and left them there in hurricane months?

Who is responsible for their deaths?

The writer of this article lives a long way from Washington.... But he does know that wealthy people, yachtsmen, fisherman such as President Hoover and President Roosevelt do not come to the Florida Keys in hurricane months....because [they] know there would be great danger, inescapable danger, to their property if a storm should come.... But veterans, especially the bonus-marching variety...are not property. They are human beings...and all they have to lose is their lives. They are doing coolie labor for a top wage of \$45 a month and they

have been put down on the Florida Keys where they can't make trouble....

As this is written five days after the storm, nobody knows how many are dead...but the total of veterans dead and missing alone numbers 442.... The total of dead may well pass a thousand, as many bodies were swept out to sea and never will be found.... But the veterans had been sent there; they had no opportunity to leave, nor any protection against hurricanes; and they never had a chance for their lives....

Who sent nearly a thousand war veterans, many of them husky, hard-working and simply out of luck...to live in frame shacks on the Florida Keys in hurricane months?

Why were the men not evacuated on Sunday, or at least Monday morning, when it was known there was a possibility of a hurricane striking the Keys and evacuation was their only possible protection?

Who advised against sending the train from Miami to evacuate the veterans until four-thirty o'clock on Monday so that it was blown off the tracks before it ever reached the lower camps?....

Now it's calm and clear and blue and almost the way it is when the millionaires come down in the winter...except for the smell of the dead that always smell the same in all countries that you go to.... Or is it just that dead soldiers smell the same no matter what their nationality or who sends them to die?....

You're dead now, brother, but who left you there in the hurricane months on the Keys where a thousand men died before you when they were building the same road that's now washed out?

Who left you there? And what's the punishment for manslaughter now? ☛